

College Transparency Act

Section-by-Section

Sec 1: Short title: College Transparency Act

Sec 2: Postsecondary Student Data System

- 1) Purpose: Directs the Commissioner for Education Statistics to develop and maintain a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student- level data system. The goals of the system are to provide accurate, complete, and customizable information about institutions and programs for students and families, while supporting transparency, institutional improvement, and analysis of federal student aid programs. The system shall reduce reporting burdens for institutions by allowing the data compiled through the system to meet current reporting requirements and reducing duplicative reporting to various agencies; and shall meet high standards for privacy and security, including following data minimization practices.
- 2) Data elements: Directs the Commissioner to work with the Postsecondary Student Data System Advisory Committee – comprised of agency security officials, representatives of state higher education bodies, student representatives, representatives from relevant federal agencies, and postsecondary researchers – to determine required data elements to be included in the system and to reduce any duplicative reporting.
 - Establishes that, at a minimum, data elements must include the data currently reported by colleges to calculate the information within the student-related surveys in The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
 - Establishes that, at a minimum, the data collected must allow for reporting student enrollment, persistence, retention, transfer, and completion measures for all credential levels and across institutions and programs. This data shall be disaggregated by a number of important student characteristics.
 - Includes prohibitions on collecting sensitive data, including citizenship status, health information, grades, entrance exam results, political affiliation, religion, and more.
- 3) Periodic Data Matching: Directs the Commissioner to coordinate with other federal agencies including Census Bureau and Departments of Treasury, Defense, and Veterans Affairs to ensure secure, temporary data matches that will produce valuable, aggregate information on student earnings and outcomes.
 - Allows for analysis of outcomes of students receiving veterans and military education benefits.
 - Allows for analysis of completion outcomes and post-completion outcomes such as earnings, employment, and further education.
 - Prohibits the creation of single Federal database at the Department of Education.
 - Directs the Commissioner to ensure data matches are not continuous and comply with several security and privacy protections.
 - Directs the Commissioner to establish process for students to access their information and make corrections to any inaccuracies.
- 4) Publicly Available Information: Directs the Commissioner to make the summary information about colleges and majors available to the public on a user-friendly website for students, families, and the public. At a minimum, this information must include measures of student access, completion, costs, and post-collegiate outcomes for each college and major, disaggregated by student characteristics.
 - Requires the Commissioner to use appropriate protocols for preventing disclosures of individual data.
 - Prohibits the summary aggregate information to include personally identifiable information.

- 5) Permissible Disclosures of Data: Directs the Commissioner to create a secure process for providing program-level, non-personally identifiable data on currently or formerly enrolled students back to institutions that participate in this postsecondary data system. This is to be used solely for approved vetted research, institutional improvement, and program evaluation.
- Creates a process through which states may access program- and institutional-level aggregate data on student mobility and workforce outcomes for participating institutions located in their state.
 - Prohibits any sale of student data.
 - Prohibits the Commissioner from allowing any other federal agency to use data collected by this data system for purposes not outlined in the legislation.
 - Prohibits any personally identifiable information in this system from being used by law enforcement or any outside entity.
 - Prohibits the creation of a summative Federal ranking or ratings system.
- 6) Data Submission: Requires colleges and universities that participate in the federal student aid program to participate in this postsecondary data system. Allows institutions that do not participate in the federal student aid system to voluntarily participate in this postsecondary data system.
- 7) Prescribes criminal penalties for unlawful willful disclosure.
- 8) Directs the Commissioner to produce and update guidance and regulations relating to privacy and security to protect from unauthorized access, use, and disclosure.

Sec 3: Repeals the prohibition on a student data system

Sec 4: Aligns institutional requirements for data collection and submission

Sec 5: Transition provisions

- Establishes effective date for secs. 1, 2, and 4 as four years after enactment of this Act.
- Directs the Secretary and the Commissioner to ensure that transition and implementation of this system reduces reporting burden for institutions.

To sign on as a cosponsor, or for more information, please contact Laura Healy with Rep. Mitchell at laura.healy@mail.house.gov.